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Outlaw Agencies

The Ben Barka scandal, which has rocked the French government to its foundations, underlines the inherent immorality of giving a government agency the power to operate outside the law.

A secret agency of the French government, the Department of Alien Documentation and Counterespionage, apparently kidnapped Moroccan opposition leader Mehdi Ben Barka and handed him over to his political opponents, who presumably murdered him.

President De Gaulle has fired the head of this agency and has shifted

responsibility for its actions from Premier Georges Pompidou to Defense Minister Pierre Messmer. But that is no guarantee against new abuses.

It may be necessary for the French to perpetuate the Department of Alien Documentation and Counterespionage—or, for that matter, for the United States to operate a Central Intelligence Agency.

Yet there is no getting around the fact that such outlaw agencies are open to the same abuses as the Gestapo and the NKVD which spawned them.